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Devin C. Boilard

Abstract/Synthesis of UbD/DI Chapter Three

Abstract:

Chapter Three is dense with information and covers one of the most encompassing questions in the field of education, [what to teach?](#) The sheer vastness of content that needs to be covered in any given discipline is overwhelming, while the limited class time dedicated to the topics only exasperates the issue. The answer to this question lies in the Understanding by Design method.

While national and state content standards, in their amount alone, have mainly only increased the amount of pressure on teachers to fit it all in, the UbD method uses standards in a beneficial manner. Tomlinson and McTighe redirect the process of content and assessment planning by looking at the big picture, backwards. UbD is broken down into three stages, Stage 1 entails identifying the goal of the curriculum. What are the general themes we want to follow and what should students know, understand, and be able to do with the knowledge? To identify just what these “big ideas” are the authors suggest going to an unexpected source, content standards. It is here the vague language of the standards can be beneficial to the task at hand. From these big ideas, garnered from the standards, the teacher must establish what the desired understandings a student should have in specifics to the topic and what essential questions need to be proposed to guide students to these understandings. It is important to note that differentiation plays no part in Stage 1, the goals laid out in this stage are concrete and remain pivotal to the success of the curriculum, and as well assures that all students are held to the same standards. In Stage 2 we determine what is acceptable evidence that mastery has been achieved in respects to skill, content knowledge, and understanding, and how we can acquire tangible proof (what type and method of assessment)? While this is a very quick and surface overview of Stage 2 it should be noted that the topic of assessment is a detailed one and takes up its own chapter (8) later in this text. The last stage of the UbD method, planning learning experiences and instruction, is where the true art begins. Teachers must be very conscious of the previous two stages while developing activities and assignments for a curriculum, assuring that they can properly lead students into a discussion of the essential questions and allows for appropriate opportunities to express evidence of learning.

Synthesis:

Cole P – *“There is an enormous amount of content that students are supposed to, or often are ‘required’ to, walk away with...”*

Russell W – *“I find the aspect of content to be an extremely confusing but astronomically important one.”*

Christopher V – *“...it would be awesome if I could cover every topic in the textbook, but that is unrealistic to condense for one year’s worth of material.”*

Ashley L – *“There will always be more content than time...”*

Ashley G – *“Based on too many content standards and the heaviness of textbook content, how do we as teachers focus our units on the ‘big ideas’?”*

Michael D – *“There are 255 standards and 3,968 benchmarks and in order to accomplish all of them there would need to be an additional nine years of schooling added to the already existing 12 years.”*

Matt P – *“...students will basically be stranded at sea, lost in content, if we don’t find ways to break it down.”*

Meghan H – *“As a future teacher, I will have to deal with a mass amount of standards regarding what I can and can’t teach my students.”*

Devin B – *“I myself was ill informed of the bureaucratic nature of standards; the more I delve into the topic the more overwhelmed I become by the complexity and serious nature of them.”*

Tyler M – *“...it is becoming increasingly difficult to satisfy the standards set by the state.”*

Tyler B – *“With all of the content that is expected to be covered in the short amount of time teachers actually have with their students, even the most enthusiastic and dedicated teachers can easily get bogged down...”*

It is fair to say that we all feel the weight of the task ahead of us. There is a strong awareness amongst us of the pitfalls of our future career; the bureaucratic and endless amounts of standards have come to dictate the choices that teachers make in their classroom. Reading the classes take on the chapter I encountered an empowered tone to the writings, we feel vested to break the mold and age old practices of the previous generations of educators and breath life into the system. The UbD approach was the [lifeline](#) that we were all so desperately looking for. The flexibility of the method was a common feature that appealed to the class. In addition the simplicity of the method was often noted, the sheer genius in the backward design a brilliant approach. This chapter acted as a great introduction for all of us to the UbD method and did well to sell us on its need to be implanted in the classrooms.

Cole Phillips

There is an enormous amount of content that students are supposed to, or often are ‘required’ to, walk away with from various curricula around the country and around the world. Content standards and textbook standards, though largely effective as means of guidance, are frequent indicators of the amount of pressure put on students and teachers alike to bring content from inchoate to full, comprehensible life.

Whether vague or otherwise, there are a host of premeditated methods deemed important enough not to go untaught to students. It is more than improbable that not every established goal will be met, and that we must learn to sacrifice and prioritize lessons, honing in on the most important of the important. Utilizing creative concepts that break down established, essential goals is one way to help teachers reach that idea of ability to offer what’s most important to their students. This idea is that a teacher begins by IDing the desired results, figuring out whether or not the students have achieved getting to those results, and establishing how exactly to get students to the results. Teachers could benefit from any number of planning techniques, but breaking lessons down as simply and as cogently as possible helps to leave the ‘what if?’ behind and focus more on how to leave a student walking away with the best possible

impression and understanding of the content. We must determine, as teachers, what it is that really matters before we can teach it.

Cheyenne

This chapter was all about standards, it explains how they were intended to “focus teaching and learning, curriculum development, and provide a basis for accountability systems.” It also talked about how learning results should be considered in terms of understanding the big ideas and core processes within the content standards. The big topic, however, was backward design. Backward design supports flexibility in teaching. It also honors integrity of content while respecting the individuality of learners. When planning backward, desired results should not be differentiated, however assessment evidence may be differentiated and learning plan should be differentiated. This will be very helpful for me. Using backward design will maximize the likelihood of all my students being successful since it is individualized. Although you want the same results for all your students, it is important to realize that all students are unique in their learning styles. I think using backward design will have a huge impact in my classroom in many ways; one being that students will be more likely to be engaged, as I will try to form a unique assessment and learning plan for different students. Another way it will impact my classroom could be the success rate. This is because the desired outcomes will be the same for every student. Every student is capable of achieving each of the standards, they may just use a different technique of how they get to that level of achievement.

Russell Warren

Chapter 3: What Really Matters in Learning?

I find the aspect of content to be an extremely confusing but astronomically important one. If I don't have a proper, well-planned, and well-modeled curriculum for me and my students to follow, I will essentially fail as a teacher. To succeed, I must provide my student with appropriate information that they cannot only use in their standardized tests, but in the real world. However, as the authors state, it's increasingly hard to follow the standards states set out. Thankfully, the subject of English does not change too much, and the content lends itself to the idea of a “conceptual lens”, where students understand a specific subject but can also apply it to larger concepts, satisfying various guidelines. “We believe,” Tomlinson and McTighe write, “that a teacher's job is to teach for learning of important content, to check regularly for understanding on the parts of all students, and to make adjustments based on results” (p. 28). That's where the concept of backwards learning comes in, and I completely support the idea. I may have a great idea or desire to teach a certain piece of literature or poetry, but I must discover what I want to achieve with the content before I dive in to instruction. The state, while possibly providing too many standards, should provide standards that are made up of essential questions, lending to my planning. Backwards design lends itself to an incredibly full and detailed design plan which is also open to differentiation, and it creates a sort of exciting lead up to actually teaching the content.

Christopher Vogel

Chapter three in the UbD/DI focuses on backwards planning and its effectiveness in flexible teaching. Backwards planning stresses goal centered development and allows for variances in activities or lecture depending on the students' needs. It sounds like the backwards planning is a more reliable plan to have when stuck on how to teach a subject or class. The chapter also focused on how subjects in the classroom should not be too broad or narrow but connect to multiple (related) areas of focus. This would help my choosing of topics to cover in a class (after looking at state/school requirements). Topics like the Indus River valley might not be ideal topics due to the small amount of information and relatable details. Instead I would look at topics like the Romans that could be linked to several other topics and provide an in-depth discussion in the class. One part of the chapter I felt was really interesting is the second sin of planning and teaching. Even as a student I would think it would be awesome if I could cover every topic in the textbook, but that is unrealistic to condense for one year's worth of material. This chapter impacted my planning by looking at the topics I have to deal with and picking the most efficient and comprehensive topics. The backwards planning itself provides a systematic approach with flexibility for needs or unforeseen problems. In my own opinion planning activities after evidence is effective because the evidence is not dependent on the activity. If the activity does not work out or is not understood, you can still explain the evidence rather than scrapping the whole plan.

Ashley Libby

This chapter talked about the many different teaching and learning standards that not only teachers must fulfill but as well as the students. However, most of the chapter focused on Backward Design. There were three stages to backward design that this chapter covered. Stage one: Identify desired results, is about considering the goals, content standards and review the curriculum expectations. There will always be more content than time which means that we, as teachers, must make choices and prioritize that time. Stage two: Determine acceptable evidence, is about getting teachers and planners to "think like an assessor." This is done before planning any specific lessons or units. This assessment evidence must mirror the desired results identified in stage one. It means that we must consider in advance the required assessment evidence needed to show that the desired learning has been accomplished. Stage three: Plan learning experiences and instruction, is about asking what kind of knowledge the students need in order to achieve the desired results specified the step two and one. Stage three is also about how to keep the teaching engaging for our students while always knowing what the overall goal is. As a teacher, backward design can be very useful and handy when making sure that even though you cannot go over all the content, the students learn the goals you've planned for them. They learn the goals and they enjoy learning the goals as well. We must make sure we identify every possible part to a lesson to make sure that we are fulfilling not only our own goals and expectations, but the standards of every teacher state-wide as well.

Ashley Godbout

Based on too many content standards and the heaviness of textbook content, how do we as teachers focus our units on the "big ideas" instead of fitting in an overload of standards? These big ideas will come from the essential questions that the core content standards pose. The book goes on to explain backwards planning which we discussed in class. This explanation helped me to understand the key concepts of this way of planning and why it's important. When teachers can assess what students should learn, know, be able to do and understand, they can effectively plan units and lessons with activities and include

assessments like tests and quizzes. Stage 2 brings up the how; how will we know our students are achieving goals planned in stage 1? Assessments will validate that our students are learning successfully. Stage 3 is when lessons and activities are planned and appropriate resources are thought out. When the unit is complete all students should be able to understand and actively be able to re-teach what they've learned about the "big ideas". The idea of backward design is so creative and smart because it models the process of goal setting. How is one supposed to get anywhere or accomplish things when goals are absent? When a teacher assesses the goals their students should meet throughout their unit the planning will all be related to these main goals. I'm so glad we're learning this type of design this early in our careers so we will be completely prepared and capable when we are in the field as graduates.

Michael Diffin

Reading response to integrating differentiated instruction chapter 3

I found the information in this chapter to be very interesting. In the first parts of the chapter the the statistics to meet the deadlines, benchmarks, and standards are shown. There are 255 standards and 3,968 benchmarks and in order to accomplish all of them there would need to be an additional nine years of schooling added to the already existing 12 years, something that is clearly not something that can be done. This chapter goes into understanding by design because it is trying to set us up to accomplish all of the standards and benchmarks through this process. Understanding by design entails setting the goals first which would mean identifying the desired goals first, finding the essential questions and understandings which would mean finding the acceptable evidence for the goals, and the knowledge and skill basing the plan off of learning experiences and instruction. By setting the goals first we can set the benchmarks and standards up to be accomplished. The chapter goes into talking about he big questions that can set us up to accomplish them quicker. Through examining larger ideas and associated questions we can tackle a plethora of benchmarks simultaneously. To establish these big ideas it is suggested that first you recognize the state standards. All of the stages after the first three in backwards design can be differentiated based on the students background knowledge, interests and how they learn.

Matt

During class three we pretty much discussed everything discussed in chapter three. The author really focused a lot of how to design a unit that benefits all students through differentiation and backward design. The author talks about the many different standards that are currently in place all over the United States. He brings a very valid point, and I am confused as to why this hasn't been done years ago. He says that are students will basically be stranded at sea, lost in content, if we don't find ways to break it down. As a teacher I will try to layer my content into three to four essential points. This way I can present, teach, and allow my students to have a full understanding. When they grasp the first layer and have a solid understanding I will be able to peel back a layers and teach the next part. Soon enough my students will know the entire topic and wont be lost or overwhelmed, as opposed to if I presented all four layers at once. Basically a teacher should lie out the big ideas that are simple, and easily understood by the students. This is essential to the success of the backward design process. Teachers need to first find what

students need to understand in the long run before we do anything else.

I defiantly plan to use these ideas in my classroom. I have already begun to plan my unit, and this chapter has given me even more ideas that will be helpful to the success of my unit. My goal is to focus on the big picture, the long run, and break it down for my students. I hope to see my students and their parents have an understanding that my “underlying goal of all school efforts is to improve student learning of important content” (27). Ultimately I hope to give my students the ability to comprehend and understand the multiple subjects in mathematics. By achieving this, I will be creating active learners.

Meghan

As a future teacher, I will have to deal with a mass amount of standards regarding what I can and can't teach my students. A main problem with standards is the fact that they are often too broad. It is difficult to teach standards to students when you do not understand what the purpose of the standard is. Another issue is the fact that standards are often too specific, and somehow do not fit into the main spectrum of your class environment. Teachers are also faced with the issue of how these standards will be assessed and determined in the classroom. One way to do this successfully is to begin thinking like the person who will be assessing these standards. If you are able to do this, teaching the students the information they will need to meet these standards will become easier and more effective. In order to teach your students the information they will need, it is important that you understand the learning styles and methods of your students. Doing this will ensure that you are able to teach the information to your students in a way that will help them retain and use the information when it comes to meeting the standards. Using backward design will also help to teach your students the information in a way that will be effective. In order to do this effectively, national and state standards should be used as a starting block for the content the students will need to learn.

Devin Boilard

Chapter Three: What Really Matters in Learning? (Content)

Chapter Three of *Integrating Differentiated Instruction & Understanding* acts was a great overview and manual to the Understanding by Design process. The aspects of state learning standards I think are relatively unknown to most individuals; in and of itself the career of teaching is surrounded by misconceptions. I myself was ill informed of the bureaucratic nature of standards; the more I delve into the topic the more overwhelmed I become by the complexity and serious nature of them. To add fuel to the fire these standards are ever evolving, making them difficult to stay on top of. This chapter's blunt “you can't please them all” attitude did seem to take the edge off a bit. I took many Advance Placement classes in high school and was always amazed at the “teach to the test” approach many of my teachers took. Key ideas or topics were overlooked due to the probability of them not being mentioned on the exam. We as students acted as guinea pigs, trained for the soul purpose of getting a high score on this one exam. I find these actions to go against every philosophy of teaching.

The information I was the most appreciative of however, was in the instruction of UbD use in conjunction with the standards. This pairing dissolves the rigidity of state dictations and allows there to be some movement, benefiting both the learner and the teacher. It also answers to the question posed in the beginning of the chapter in regards to time management and content overview.

Tyler Michaud

The third chapter of *Integrating Differentiated Instruction + Understanding by Design*, by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe, focused on content. Well-developed content and curriculum are absolutely crucial to education and, as the authors express, it is becoming increasingly difficult to satisfy the standards set by the state. Although there are many ways to establish a lesson, backwards planning seems efficient as it forces the teacher to keep the goal in mind throughout the planning process. Simply put, backwards planning is establishing a set of desired results and using acceptable evidence to create a lesson plan that will satisfy it. There are many benefits to planning in this way, most important, is making certain that the results that you, as the teacher, established are being achieved.

Content is indescribably essential to a good education. As a teacher it will be my job to create a clear and well-developed curriculum that will service my students, both inside and outside, of the classroom. Where I am now, the idea of developing content and curriculum is a highly daunting task, though this chapter has fed my readiness in eventually doing so. When developing a curriculum, using backwards planning could be useful in making sure that I am creating attainable goals in my lessons. Although I do believe that the state probably provides too many standards, I do think it is important for standards to exist as guidelines for education; their presence creates an even playing ground for students, no matter their background.

Tyler Brown

This chapter reveals the truth behind what a few current educators have vented to me about over the course of my college career. With all of the content that is expected to be covered in the short amount of time teachers actually have with their students, even the most enthusiastic and dedicated teachers can easily get bogged down when attempting to meet the state and federal standards. With such a vast array of content to cover, many educators find that what they are teaching tends to be “a mile wide and an inch deep”. The reality of this is frightening, especially to microscopes like myself, who personally understand the importance of diving deeper into course content to find the real meaning behind what is being taught.

As I reflect on my largest concerns about my own abilities, it is the ability to organize an entire curriculum and make it fit. However, the concept of “planning backward” brings light to this situation. Not only does it organize a rational way to cover a massive curriculum, but it also provides a way to emphasize critical thinking for key components of the content or the “big ideas”.
